Jeff Popke said this meeting was probably the last opportunity to provide concrete input into the block schedule and calendars for fall and spring. He said there had been some proposed changes to the calendar from that first draft. His understanding is there is an intent to have the calendar approved and communicated by the end of the week, probably tomorrow morning.

Jeff Popke then proposed to talk about details of the calendars drafts that are soon to be approved. One big change from Tuesday to today is in the spring. Based on some of the conversation, the question was whether spring break should be moved (because it occurred in a weird place, just after the beginning of the second block), or eliminated altogether. In the most recent draft of the calendar, the spring semester is starting later. There is just one day in between the spring blocks.

Donna Roberson asked about the day labeled “Prep Day”, is that the day off?

Angela Anderson said yes, and that it is a prep day for faculty to be able to prepare between both sessions.

Marianne Montgomery said she thinks calling it a prep day is going to insult faculty who feel they are not provided adequate time or payment to prepare their courses.

Angela Anderson said campus leadership will be happy to change it to something faculty will be happy with.

Jeff Popke noted that Jeni Parker had asked if it was a break for everyone (15-week session as well) or just between the blocks. It is a break for everyone, across the entire calendar.

Alethia Cook suggested renaming it to “no classes”.

Jeff Popke asked for clarification that everyone is in agreement that there should be no spring break.

Marianne Montgomery noted that every step they are taking is diminishing that goal of maintaining that in-person college experience for students and keeping students interested in ECU, but she agreed it is necessary.

Crystal Chambers suggested to maybe Student Affairs can coordinate an event on that break day to add some fun back in for students.

Angela Anderson said Student Affairs is planning for some sort of event for the day off that is in the Fall, and she is sure they would welcome the opportunity to plan something for the midpoint in the spring as well.

Jeff Popke said it sounds like everyone is basically in agreement about the structure of the calendar.

Marianne Montgomery said she was concerned about there not being a schedule adjustment date (drop date) for block B, because students adjust their schedules after they see instructors and syllabi. She is worried that students will have to spend their withdrawals to get out.

Angela Anderson said the plan is to allow for adjustments to schedules, but it isn’t going to be the free-for-all it usually is, because of how financial aid will be dispersed. They were able to find a way for financial aid to be dispersed that is in line with federal requirements, based upon the registered hours. So they want students to work with their advisors directly instead of just being given their registration PINs to drop and add. They can include some notation on the calendar, but they anticipated handling it through communications from academic advisors to their students as they are
talking to them throughout the semester and leading up to the beginning of the second block. They were planning to have two days in the beginning like will be done with fall for schedule adjustments.

Marianne Montgomery said she thinks it would help to put some kind of notation in the calendar that says schedule adjustments allowed after appointment with advisor. She asked whether changes would be treated like a withdrawal, but it wouldn’t count against their withdrawal allowance?

Angela Anderson said yes, but it will count against their hours for financial aid purposes.

Jeni Parker said she was curious about scholarship awards. If a student was awarded $1,000 for the Fall, will that be broken up evenly between Block A and Block B or what?

Angela Anderson said they are proceeding in such a way that it will all be awarded in the beginning just like it is now. They don’t want to create an adverse event for the student by withholding aid until a later block.

Elizabeth Swaggerty asked about SSOI dates. What is the normal window for SSOIs for students?

Angela Anderson said she tried to set those dates from what she saw on a regular calendar. She does not remember the internal guidelines that Calendar Committee has for SSOI.

Puri Martinez said that the General Education and Instructional Effectiveness Committee (GEIEC) sets the process for the SSOI and it is usually two weeks before the end of term. She said she might have to consult with the GEIEC to see when they think it should open during the 8-week blocks. It does not make sense that it would be two weeks before an 8-week block; it would make more sense to do it 1 week before the end of the term.

Elizabeth Swaggerty said she does care about that SSOI window and wants to make it consistent. It looks like for Block B there is a 14-day window. She said she has also been thinking about the importance of communicating to students, especially if they are dually enrolled in a 15-week block and an 8-week block. These dates are going to get confusing, and we need to do whatever we can to help them know these dates. All faculty will need to support one another and the students with these different calendars.

Puri Martinez agreed that it was important for advisors to have some kind of training with all the new dates and information so they are better equipped to deal with it. She pointed out that in some depts the advisors are faculty teaching a lot of classes at the same time they are carrying out advising duties. For those faculty advisors this will be a really challenging time.

Timm Hackett asked in terms of spring break, are we following what other schools are doing? He said he knows every school is adjusting their calendar, but ECU is adjusting their calendar and attacking the situation with the blocks too. Most other schools in the system are not going to a block schedule and seem to be attacking the situation in the fall semester, and by the spring semester they return to some sort of normalcy. Now ECU is possibly looking less attractive to students wanting that college experience, especially by getting rid of spring break.

Crystal Chambers said we may be able to deal with that feeling if we think about the types of things we can do to give them that college experience and organize events to help with that. She suggested something like a spring fling.

Timm Hackett said he was not thinking so much about the spring break craziness, but the fact that we are taking away that time for faculty and students to decompress. Also, what about students who live far away and are not North Carolina residents? Are we asking parents to drop off your student and not see them at all for 15 weeks?

Leigh Cellucci asked if they could postpone the spring calendar. We are speculating what will happen with the virus, and by settling this now, we may have to backtrack which will just make it more confusing. Can’t we wait to see what happens with the virus?
Puri Martinez said the officers did ask the Interim Chancellor and Provost yesterday about why it could not be postponed and they said the spring calendar had to be published right away because of financial aid and scholarship money.

Jeff Popke said he paused before answering to let Angela Anderson weigh in, because she may have a better sense of the mechanics. He said that Julie Poorman and Dee Bowling at the Altered Calendar Committee meeting yesterday made it clear they were beginning work on Monday to get financial aid disbursed. To do that, they need a clear beginning date and an ending date for the spring, and while we can play around with some of the stuff in the middle a little bit, adding on a week or subtracting a week for a financial package that has set starting and ending dates. He isn’t sure why it is so strict and it feels unreasonable that they have to rush this through for something starting next year, but that is what he was led to believe.

Angela Anderson said that information is accurate, but another piece is that we need to give all students and parents the information they need ahead of time. When we cancel the spring break late in the process, that sends a different message than one in which you go into it knowing what the calendar is and what to expect. So it is that consideration on top of the workings of the loans, VA benefits, and scholarships concerns.

Leigh Cellucci agreed those are all good reasons to settle it early, so the primary issue is then whether there should be a spring break.

Puri Martinez said she understands what everyone is saying but starting later and not having a spring break so students do not go out and do crazy things in Florida is important to do. In terms of the complications and how can we attract or retain our students when our schedule may appear less attractive, she thinks they are not our concerns. They are the concerns of the administration, who wanted to do 8-week blocks. They are taking the risks. She said Jeff Popke was very strong in expressing the concerns about the 8-week blocks to administration, and they still want to do it. As for concerns that we are going to lose the students or we aren’t going to have much fun, well—that is an Admissions problem and Student Affairs problem.

Timm Hackett said he is just wondering if we are matching what similar schools are doing in our system. He is looking at the schedules of other UNC institutions and they have a spring break, etc. He is just looking at what is going on in our state and asking how we going to recruit students.

Puri Martinez said those other institutions are all continuing with a semester system, and we are not.

Marianne Montgomery said she feels pretty confident that every institution is muddling through this right now and it is a bit like the blind leading the blind, and they are looking at what the institutions who announce plans first are doing before they go along and do the same thing. She thinks most of them will end up cancelling spring break eventually.

Amanda Klein said she thinks this group is being asked to solve problems that are being faced by the world but also created by our administration with rash decisions made so early. She feels like we are going around in circles trying to solve problems that can’t be solved: keep the college experience and keep students and faculty safe, etc. Most faculty are just teachers, and we don’t know how to do these things. She wonders what it is they are being asked to solve, here, and what is within their power to actually recommend.

Jeff Popke said he has not heard widespread opposition to cancelling spring break. Without this group, there will be no faculty input into the matter, but if this group had a unified opinion on any aspect of the calendar, then administration may be open to change. He agreed that CIT is not really qualified nor do they have the foreknowledge to know with certainty how things will go. He expressed concern about faculty having a schedule without a spring break. He admitted that he doesn’t want to give up his spring break and every year when it comes around he feels like he really needs that time. In a year when faculty morale will be flagging, it seems almost cruel to take it away—but he thinks they also need to err on the side of caution. Making the public message that our foremost concern is making sure our students are healthy is what we can do.
Jean-Luc Scemama pointed out that June 8th is coming very fast, and there are still details that have not been worked out. Are we still going to have time to get feedback from departments about the schedule? Is there any reassuring news?

Jeff Popke said Angela Anderson can update CIT on that when she is able to resolve her audio issues. Because of the block scheduling and the difficulty of fitting everything in before Thanksgiving, the two blocks have different numbers of classes, and not each day of the week meets the same number of times. He is not sure there is a solution to that if we are going to get two days of exams and end by Thanksgiving. There is some leeway in the spring, possibly.

Angela Anderson was able to call back in to the meeting, and said what she is waiting for and what her team is waiting for is the final process that this group is identifying for what classes are moving to which block. They have been meeting with the software vendor to test and run the script. Once they run the script, they will allow departments to make adjustments, and then have advisors review schedules to make sure students don’t have only online classes or all classes in one block. All of that is happening before June 8th, when orientation opens, and registration is opening on June 9th. The sooner her group has the particulars for how to make the migration happen, the better.

Marianne Montgomery asked if there will be BIC reports or other reports available to help advisors?

Angela Anderson said yes. That group is waiting for the specification of the rules to program those reports.

Marianne Montgomery noted that in terms of making adjustments, any kind of adjustments that require dropping students and re-adding them to sections are running into registration holds.

Angela Anderson said she can fix that problem. She has informally been given consent to release all restrictions while the adjustments are happening, and once she has formal approval of that she will be able to change the settings to allow changes in student schedules without triggering registration restrictions.

Jason Yao wanted to go back to the room capacity issue. Not everyone is understanding that they are going to reassign rooms, because that information has not really been announced formally. What is the recommended capacity looking like? For most of the courses, we are maintaining the same start and end time, but for the space issue, what is the picture looking like? Do we have an overall picture right now?

Angela Anderson said they have been working with Space Planning and based on some of the guidelines that are going to come out from the Public Health Committee, where large lectures are moved online, some classes will be moving to new rooms. The Schedule 25 administrator and Beth Dawson have been working on that and they are testing that process to see how they can minimize the impact to academic units.

Jason Yao said it sounds like we really do not know if we are going to have enough rooms for what is needed to meet social distancing requirements.

Angela Anderson said they have confidence there will be enough rooms with enough social distancing. It may mean that a faculty member is not teaching in the room they are usually teaching in, but in order to provide proper distancing between students and maintain enrollment, it has to change. If a unit has a classroom with a cap of 49 students they set the enrollment to the maximum of the room cap, then they have to move to a classroom that can accommodate 100.

Jason Yao agreed that classes seating 40-50 students would need to move up to larger classes, and then the smaller classes would be able to move into those vacated rooms, but he just doesn’t know whether there will be enough rooms to accommodate all those moves.

Angela Anderson said they feel they have sufficient capacity, especially when using spaces we don’t usually use, like Wright Auditorium, rooms in the Student Recreation Center, Mendenhall, etc.

Jean-Luc Scemama asked if there is a plan for the migration of labs or are those being left to the department?
Angela Anderson said they are going to have units look into that, because units will know whether a particular lab requires equipment that is not available in another room.

Jean-Luc Scemama agreed that there are so many moving parts, it would be best for the department to handle those moves.

Marianne Montgomery asked about online classes being assigned to blocks. She thought units would be able to do it but given that they will only have one day to make those changes, are they going to migrate automatically into one of the blocks or just be hanging out there, unassigned to a particular block?

Angela Anderson said they will hang out there if no guidance was provided for the computer to make the move.

Marianne Montgomery asked if unit staff will know how to move those DE courses into a block. They haven’t received any guidance on this, so far.

Angela Anderson said one of the things that Novine Kros (she usually handles Degree Works for the Registrar’s Office) is doing is working with the consultants to make job aids for departments to use.

Marianne Montgomery said they still don’t have any guidance about faculty requests to move online due to health concerns. She asked if she was right in assuming that if courses for those faculty are moved online later that they will need to stay in the same block to which they were assigned. In other words, they can’t be switching blocks a lot because advisors are going to be making adjustments to student schedules and it would be potentially disruptive to their work.

Angela Anderson said ideally they would want them to remain in the blocks they were assigned to if they move from face to face to online, and they would also like some sort of notification to go out to students as well.

Jason Yao said when Angela Anderson discussed online courses, those are the courses that have been online, but what about courses that were exempted? The departments will not have to do anything with those courses after the automatic migration, right?

Angela Anderson said if those courses have gone through the exemption process, then departments will not have to do anything. If the course has been approved by exception through general exception or went through approval process, then they will be automatically excluded from the blocks and will not need to be moved.

Jeni Parker said that because a lot of classes in the School of Theatre and Dance are studio based, her unit determines where they will be located. Will that be something they will need to do in the classes that need to go into the blocks? Will they make that change, or will the Registrar’s Office make that change?

Angela Anderson said if it is a course the unit preassigned, they want them to work with the Registrar’s Office. If they want to give the Registrar’s Office that information, they can certainly update it.

Jeni Parker said her unit was talking about some of their larger dance classes being moved to McGinnis Auditorium. They have a task force to figure out how to put their students in classes in larger capacity rooms.

Puri Martinez said based on the model that Marianne Montgomery created, there was going to be some possibility of adjusting the percentage online content (from 12%-46%, etc.) and the idea was that for each course that was offered, you were going to put it in the 12% hybrid model by default and departments could change it to a different percentage of online content. Is that still in place, and right now with the new calendar that has been created, what are the percentages? Do you know?

Angela Anderson said they are going to move it so the classes take the maximum block of time, and that is how they are going to assign them. Then, if departments wish to offer the course with a different percentage of online content, as
long as it isn’t 50% or more it is fine. For students, it is better to be told they have to be in class from 8-9:30 and then be let out early at the decision of the faculty member. She certainly does not want to ask departments to have to go in and do more work.

Marianne Montgomery said she is concerned that the hybridization percentages are confusing. Given that units are not going to schedule the classes in Banner, she asked the members of CIT if it would be helpful once they have the calendar for her or someone else to go through and say “this is the earliest you could let out and still meet requirements” for each time block. In her own department she wants to be somewhat prescriptive, or she worries that everyone will end up letting their classes out too early too often.

Puri Martinez said she thinks the committee giving that sort of guidance to others would be a very good idea.

Jason Yao said he thinks communication about these things would be good. They should have training or some way to make it easy for everyone to understand the calendars. That is key to reduce frustration. Otherwise partway through the semester we will see a mess.

Jeff Popke said he had thought the course links would still be programmed in Banner and departments were going to formally move them. He realizes now that faculty and their departments will have to agree on what course links/percentage DE they want for their courses. He agrees that it would be very good for this committee to put out some guidance and worries about it being a free-for-all. This committee should probably articulate that there are a discrete number of models that fit within the timeslots and we expect faculty to pick one. Faculty will also need guidance about what these percentages look like for providing content online, etc. This body can play an important role there.

Alethia Cook asked Angela Anderson for confirmation of the enrollment cap for classes to stay face-to-face and not move online. She had heard it was 50?

Angela Anderson said that is what she has heard and what her office is planning for.

Jeff Popke said he has a class capped at 54 that he definitely wants to be face-to-face, so he will work to get that cap lowered. It only has 10 or 12 students, so he does not think dropping it by 4 will have much impact.

Jason Yao asked is there any room to make those sorts of exemptions?

Jean-Luc Scemama noted that faculty still have to accommodate all the students who have registered here. They can’t reduce all the class caps unless they offer more sections.

Mark McCarthy asked if there are any courses that are meeting once a week, and when would their final exams be? Maybe that is something the Calendar Committee needs to be looking into?

Angela Anderson said that when you start talking about completely altering how we handle final exams, she feels ill equipped to create a final exam schedule.

Marianne Montgomery said there is no logic to program once a week courses being moved into blocks, but she thought they did say those courses would have to go a bit longer.

Angela Anderson said she thinks her office will need some department advisement on that.

Jason Yao asked if it possible to restrict how many exams a student would have in a single day, so they won’t end up with three or more in a single day?

Angela Anderson said right now, when that happens, typically the student and faculty member work together to agree on an alternative time for the student. We do have students occasionally come to the Registrar’s office to talk about that
and she initiates the conversation with the faculty member to see if a student can take the exam with a different section. She imagines we can still do that this time around.

Jeff Popke noted that they had nearly used all the time allotted for the meeting and asked if CIT wants to continue meeting. Next week will be a very busy week as CIT members are going to be in the midst of those schedule adjustments. He pointed out that to some extent, CIT has done their task. Once a communication goes out, the calendar has more or less been implemented. This has been the only faculty-driven forum providing input into the reopening process. There are lots of questions to resolve, but that might not be for this group. Should we put something on the schedule for next week?

Jean-Luc Scemama said maybe next week is not the best week to meet again because they will be busy scheduling their own departments. But after the storm of next week, he thinks it will be ok.

Alethia Cook said she thinks CIT could be called on an as-needed basis. She has a lot of understanding she wouldn't have had if she hadn't participated in this group, and she finds that valuable.

Puri Martinez said there is going to be guidance document coming from the Interim Chancellor in which he is asking for feedback from the officers and maybe having feedback from this group would be good as well.

Jeff Popke said documents have come in from different committees and the Interim Chancellor is distilling it into what will be the guidance for the entire reopening. He would like to have the input from this group on that document, and he can communicate as needed. Those quick email discussions have worked pretty well. Maybe this group can be used for an initial sounding board.

Marianne Montgomery suggested that Jeff and Puri pivot to work Faculty Senate and see what they can do with guidance. That will need to be done quickly—we can't wait until August or late July. Faculty will need things like a syllabus statement and information about hybrid models and what that different percentages of online content looks like. Those are things that aren't about giving feedback to the administration, but instead doing the planning.

Crystal Chambers said that seems like something the Office of Faculty Excellence can coordinate. They have been developing some boilerplate language for other things and they can be a central repository for that information.

Jeff Popke agreed that he can involve the relevant Senate committees and thanked everyone for their input and feedback.

The meeting adjourned at 3:04 PM.